

Play It Safe With Eggs

Sunnyside up, scrambled, and boiled are just a few of the many ways you can cook your eggs! There are many different breakfast or brunch options. Some of these are omelets, breakfast casseroles, quiches, baked eggs, poached eggs on toast, breakfast burritos, and scramblers, which include potatoes, scrambled eggs, cheese, and vegetables. If you want to incorporate eggs into other meals, you can make deviled eggs, egg salad, fried rice, or even put a fried egg on a hamburger!

Farm fresh eggs that are not properly cleaned and sanitized before being used can cause human illness. Collect eggs at least twice daily. Discard eggs with broken or cracked shells. Clean eggs promptly after collection. Eggs with soil or debris can be cleaned with fine sandpaper, a brush, or emery cloth. If eggs need to be washed, the temperature of the water should be no less than 110°F and no more than 120°F to prevent the egg contents from contracting and producing a vacuum. Never soak or leave eggs in standing water. An unscented dishwashing liquid can be used to wash eggs. Eggs can be sanitized before storing by dipping in a solution of 1 Tablespoon of bleach added to 1 gallon of water. Rinse, dry, and refrigerate the eggs. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after handling fresh eggs and/or poultry.

With the concern about Salmonella and Campylobacter, eggs gathered from laying hens should be refrigerated as soon as possible. Eggs stored in a carton in the refrigerator should hold their optimal quality for at least four weeks. Date the storage carton or container and use older eggs first. Refrigerated eggs should not be left out for more than 2 hours.

No one should eat foods containing raw eggs. However, in-shell pasteurized eggs may be used safely without cooking.

When using eggs, you want to make sure they have not gone bad before cooking with them. You can do a couple of freshness tests on both farm-fresh and store-bought eggs. The first test is known as the float test. When the egg is put into a bowl of water, a fresh egg will sink and lay flat on its side. An egg that has not gone bad yet is not as fresh will sink and stand on one end of the egg. You do not want your eggs to be floating in the water because this indicates that your eggs have gone bad and should not be eaten. Like lots of other food, a smell test is another option when testing your eggs. If you crack your egg and it smells sulphuric, gassy, or sour, your eggs have gone bad.

An unexpected but simple way to keep your eggs longer would be to freeze them. When using a muffin tin, you can crack your eggs, scramble them, and pour them into the tin. After letting these freeze in the tin, you can take them out and have what looks like “pucks.” These pucks can be stored in a ziplock bag in the freezer. You can also freeze pre-cooked eggs, and then you just have to defrost and warm them up instead of cooking them after they have been in the freezer. Frozen eggs can last you up to 3 months.

Proper cooking is the last step in ensuring the safety of the eggs. Cook eggs until a minimum internal temperature of 145°F is reached. Egg casseroles must reach 160°F.

Eggs are also incredibly nutritious because they contain protein, healthy fats, and many nutrients like vitamins A, D, E, choline, iron, and folate. Two large eggs contain 13 grams of protein.

Protect yourself and your family by following these safe handling tips when collecting, buying, storing, preparing, and serving eggs or foods that contain them.

(Sources: eggsafety.org; www.incredibleegg.org; www.fightbac.org; www.fsis.usda.gov; nchfp.uga.edu; www.southernliving.com)